

THE ROADRUNNER

Nebraska Department of Roads

Spring 2017



the Roadrunner

Published quarterly by the
Nebraska Department of Roads

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NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Journey.

DEPARTMENT OF ROADS

From the Director

New Beginnings Ahead for Department of Roads



Kyle Schneweis

The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) is no stranger to change. From our beginnings in 1895 as the State Board of Irrigation to becoming the Department of Public Works in 1919 and then the Department of Roads and Irrigation in 1933 and fast forwarding to current day, the department has gone through its fair share of evolution. These changes over the years have highlighted the department's ability to adapt and respond to the challenges that come with meeting Nebraska's infrastructure needs. As you read this edition of the Roadrunner, NDOR is once again preparing for a new chapter because as of July 1, 2017, we will become the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT).

During the most recent session of the Nebraska Legislature, Governor Pete Ricketts signed Legislative Bill 339 merging NDOR and the Nebraska Department of Aeronautics in to NDOT. This combination of our two state agencies will provide for efficiencies and streamlining of services. It also allows our state to be laser focused on economic development in the investment decisions we make about infrastructure. I'm looking forward to partnering with Aeronautics Director Ronnie Mitchell to accomplish these goals.

You will see some of these changes in effect when the merger takes full effect on July 1 and others will happen more gradually. For example, the department's website, publications, and social media platforms will be updated to reflect the switch to NDOT on the merger date. However, some items such as road signage will remain in place after July 1 and be phased out and changed to NDOT as replacement warrants in order to make sure every care is being made to be fiscally responsible.

While our name may be changing, there are many things that will stay the same. Most importantly is the department's dedication to being good stewards of taxpayer money, delivering projects that grow Nebraska's economy, and providing outstanding customer service to our state's transportation network users. We'll also be continuing our steadfast commitment to engaging the citizenry of Nebraska as part of the development and construction of all projects for which we are involved.

I am proud and excited to lead the department during these times of great change and opportunity. I am also thankful for our hardworking, dedicated employees who get the job done each and every day. I look forward to sharing more with you about the new NDOT's achievements in the months ahead! ■

Sharon Rues Named Special Assistant to the Director

Sharon Rues joined the Nebraska Department of Roads as Special Assistant to the Director on January 4. Rues came to Roads after serving for two years with the State—in the Governor's Office and at the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). She also served 20 years at Mutual of



Sharon Rues

Omaha, working in various business areas, Process Improvement and Human Resources.

As the Special Assistant to the Director, Rues is responsible for driving strategy with the agency at a division and district level and other enterprise level projects. She also leads Business Technology Support Division (BTSD), Communications, Controller, Government Affairs, and Human Resources.

Rues came to Nebraska from England when her father became stationed at Offutt AFB. She attended Bellevue University, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in

Communication. She earned her Master of Arts degree in Communication and Graduate Certificate in Human Resources and Training from University of Nebraska at Omaha.

During her career, Rues has enjoyed

developing people and watching them grow, both personally and professionally. Among major accomplishments, she is most proud of engineering multiple processes at Mutual of Omaha that resulted in turning a struggling department that was a "black eye" of the company into a success.

As far as future goals, Rues noted three particular areas: driving strategy, increasing communication and being more transparent, adding, "I want to break down silos to allow for more open lines of communication. You will always find an open door to my office and I look forward

to meeting as many people as possible."

Regarding her approach toward management, Rues wants to empower others—set expectations for success and trust them to make the right decision. "When you have a particular issue to discuss, I ask you to come to me with the solution, not the problem."

Carrying this a step further, Rues challenges NDOR employees to be proactive versus reactive, looking for opportunities to be entrepreneurial. She also advises, "If you don't know how your work impacts the big picture, ask. By looking at your job more strategically as to what you do and its importance in serving the State of Nebraska, you will become more engaged, knowing that your work has purpose and value."

Rues' time away from work is spent raising two boys, Carter, 13, and Fletcher, 11. She enjoys writing, playing golf, running and being a full-time soccer mom. ■

INNOVATION CHALLENGE

NDOR's first annual Innovation Showcase will be held on June 22 at the Lincoln Headquarters. The individuals whose innovations made the 'elite eight' in the voting brackets will display their innovations and answer questions. After a final vote, prizes will be awarded for the top four innovations. *Learn more about the winning innovations in the next Roadrunner!*

NDOR, Partners Prepare for August 21 Solar Eclipse

On August 21, 2017, all of North America will be treated to a rare celestial event—an eclipse of the sun.

This will be the first total solar eclipse visible from the continental United States in nearly four decades. The last one spotted took place in 1979. This eclipse will carve a path across the entire country, and Nebraska will be among the 14 states who will experience full viewing.

According to greatamericaneclipse.com/nebraska, the Cornhusker State is neatly bisected by the path of the total solar eclipse. As the state is dominated by treeless prairies and crop fields, there will be little interference of the total eclipse of the sun by trees, terrain, or structures. Weather permitting, eclipse-seeking visitors should have a good view along Interstate 80 headed east, from North Platte to the edge of Lincoln, as well as other roads in Nebraska. The western section of Nebraska is highly recommended for viewing, particularly the Sandhills, with US-385 in the vicinity of Alliance, Nebraska, specifically mentioned as a good choice.

Nebraska will be among the states planning

festivals and other activities for the weekend leading up to the event, with hotels and campsites filling up in the viewing areas as public interest continues to grow. For the past several months, NDOR has been a part of AASHTO's TransComm Solar Eclipse Task Force, an effort to help states coordinate communication about the solar eclipse, including safety guidelines. NDOR has also partnered with Nebraska Tourism and Nebraska Game and Parks in preparing for the event.

The Nebraska Tourism website, visitnebraska.com/nice_trip/2017-total-solar-eclipse provides links to activities at many of the communities along the eclipse's path. The Game and Parks website, outdoornebraska.gov/eclipse/ includes a full list of all the state parks and recreation areas where the eclipse can be viewed. Many of the parks will be hosting events concurrent with the eclipse and updates will be provided on the website.

Tourists in the area for viewing of the solar eclipse are also reminded that activities are ongoing throughout the year for Nebraska 150, the state's sesquicentennial celebration. For more information about planned activities and initiatives, go to ne150.org/programs-events. ■

Nebraska is neatly bisected by the path of the total solar eclipse. Weather permitting, eclipse-seeking visitors should have a good view along I-80 from North Platte to Lincoln.



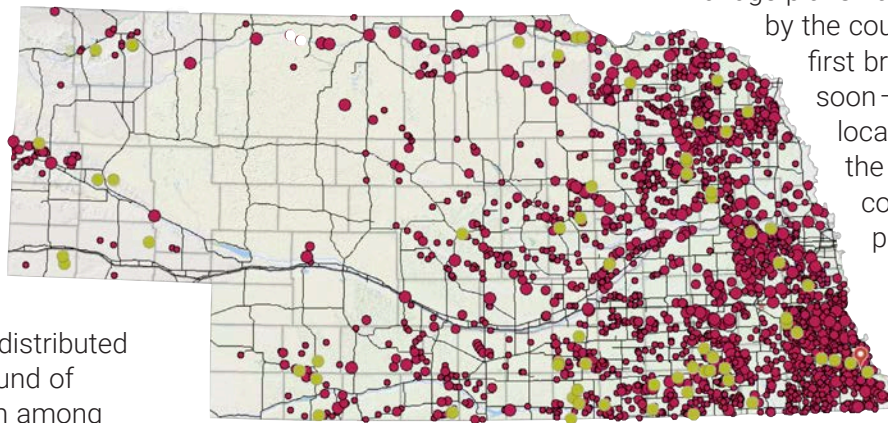
Partnerships Drive County Bridge Match Program's Success

The County Bridge Match Program (CBMP) has made significant progress in just one year, due to the joint efforts of the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) and their county transportation partners. The program, created as a result of the Transportation Innovation Act (TIA) signed into law by Governor Pete Ricketts in April 2016, provides up to \$40 million in funds to counties for the innovative replacement and repair of deficient county bridges in Nebraska.

Soon after its creation, a working group comprised of transportation leaders from across the state gathered to lay the groundwork for the program, which distributed \$4 million in the first round of proposals selected from among bridges across the state that met the program criteria. Members of this group included representatives from NDOR, the Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO), County Engineers and County Highway Superintendents, who defined the program criteria and guidelines.

Their efforts made it possible for the rapid progression of steps that followed, resulting in distribution of funds to 22 proposals, which includes 32 counties and 68 bridges. The CBMP will fund 55 percent of eligible bridge construction cost with counties providing a 45 percent match.

According to NDOR Bridge Engineer Mark Traynowicz, "This wasn't just a state program – we worked with the counties. The working group came together, discussed their concerns and what they wanted to have happen, and together we developed the program. We didn't solve every problem or answer every question, but we had a real quick turnaround in getting the program on its feet quickly."



Those 68 bridges were selected from among 2,000 eligible bridges. The bridge sites included multiple culvert pipes, concrete box culverts, precast deck panel bridges, girder bridges and bridge removals. In addition, 13 bridges will be replaced with non-bridge size structures.

"Most of these are little bridges – generally we're talking about 20- to 60-foot-long bridges. But we're getting these deficient bridges off the system, which is important," Traynowicz noted.

Additional information about the CBMP is available on the

NDOR website, roads.nebraska.gov, including an interactive map, showing locations of the 68 bridges, as well as snapshots of each of the bridges. Plans are to include "before and after" photos once the bridges are completed.

More evidence of the rapid pace of events: At this point most of the 22 program agreements for the counties to sign with the state have been returned, about a fourth of the bridge plans have been submitted

by the counties, and the first bridge may be built soon – possibly a bridge located in Custer County, the first bridge to complete the approval process.

"Within a year, we've gone from the bill being passed to having projects selected and soon projects

starting to be constructed. With a possible groundbreaking in the next month or so, it is a tribute to those who have worked together to make this happen."

Traynowicz emphasized that while much has been accomplished with the CBMP over the past year, there is still more money available. "We are only one-tenth of the way into the program, with up to \$40 million available. It's important for counties that didn't get bridges during the first round of selections not to get discouraged – there's still 90 percent of funds remaining in the program through 2023." ■



Diverging Diamond Interchange Gets Good Reception

Work on the six-lane expansion of I-80 between NW 56th Street and Hwy. 77 South in northwest Lincoln, began in July 2014 and was completed in July 2016.

The work stood out in two key ways – the project completed the last three miles of the original 40-mile stretch of Interstate 80 between Omaha and Lincoln, and it included the diverging diamond interchange (DDI) at NW 48th Street – the first of its kind in Nebraska.

Hawkins Construction Company of Omaha, Nebraska, was the contractor for the \$36,029,212 project, which was completed in seven phases. Work included grading, concrete paving, culverts,

seeding, landscaping, two new bridges – rebuilding the NW 48th Street bridge and interchange and the NW 56th Street bridge to accommodate the wider interstate. Work also included guardrail, fence, lighting, traffic signals, signing, and pavement markings.

The DDI uses traffic signals, gently curving lanes and striping to route drivers to the opposite side of the road – thereby eliminating left turns against traffic – and then brings them safely back to the correct side of the road. Advantages include significantly better traffic flow, quicker movement through left-turn signals, and improved interstate access.

Brian Johnson, engineer in NDOR's Roadway Design Division, noted that the DDI provided a

creative solution to a busy I-80 intersection in Lincoln. "When six lanes were initially built going east to west, we had no idea there would be so much traffic coming through NW 48th Street. The traffic count in 2013 was 35,190 vehicles per day, and the figure was expected to grow to 92,940 vehicles by 2034. NW 48th Street carried 12,410 vehicles per day, and projected to jump to 58,535 vehicles by 2034."

Ideal Solution

Johnson added, "Most diverging diamond interchanges are built as a result of the traffic, but our choice was to be proactive in this case. We began with environmental studies, including the impact to wetlands, to local habitats and to area communities. Since the DDI required a small footprint, the design was approved. NDOR also felt it was an ideal solution for storm water management at the time due to new federal requirements for storm water management in areas with a population greater than 100,000 people. The DDI changed the way the entire structure was designed with more outside areas for the water to flow and fewer areas for the water to collect."

Another advantage involved the cost. Johnson noted that the diverging diamond design cost about \$1 million less than a conventional interchange design, providing significant savings.

According to Joe Kuehn, NDOR Project Manager, during the project, traffic was maintained by multiple phases and routing traffic onto existing, temporary or new permanent paving. Traffic on I-80 was maintained to two lanes in each direction, except for total closures, which were done at night. Traffic was maintained on West "O" Street and NW 48th Street to one lane in each direction. NW 56th Street was closed for construction of the new bridge.

Kuehn noted that the public was very cooperative during the construction. While traffic was congested on NW 48th Street, motorists found different routes. Despite some inconveniences, comments on the end result have been very positive and people say

The Diverging Diamond Interchange uses traffic signals, gently curving lanes and striping to route drivers to the opposite side of the road – thereby eliminating left turns against traffic – and then brings them safely back to the correct side of the road.

the diverging diamond interchange is very easy to drive through. Overall, he noted that the improved traffic flow has been a benefit to local businesses and residents, as well as drivers traveling west and to downtown Lincoln. Access to Memorial Stadium from the interstate is also much easier now.

Positive Outcome

According to Kuehn, weekly partnering meetings were held involving active contractors on the project and NDOR. He noted that it was a great collaborative effort with a positive outcome.

Brian Johnson was instrumental in the design of the project, with assistance from Brian Jelinek, NDOR Roadway Design. Others involved with the project included Joe Kuehn, NDOR Project Manager, Don Valla, Superintendent for Hawkins Construction Company, as well as subcontractors for the project. Special appreciation also goes to those who participated in the environmental study and permitting process and to those who were involved in acquisition of right-of-way for the project, including appraisal, negotiations and design.

This innovative project was the recipient of a Concrete Pavement Quality Award in the category of "Best Interstate Highways and Expressways Project," presented during the 2017 Project Managers' Conference, held February 28 through March 1 in Kearney. Don Valla, Superintendent for Hawkins Construction Company, received the 2016 Signature Award for Excellence in Highway Construction, recognizing his exceptional leadership during the project. ■

NDOR's Design-Build Option for Project Delivery Benefits Customers

To better meet the needs of customers, the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) will soon implement a new option for completing certain types of road construction projects faster and more efficiently. The Transportation Innovation Act (TIA), adopted by the Nebraska Legislature in 2016, allows NDOR to utilize "design-build" contracting as an alternative method for project delivery. Prior to this, NDOR used only the traditional "design-bid-build" method.

In traditional design-bid-build, the owner either designs or hires a consultant to design the project. After a complete design package has been assembled, the project is let to bid for construction, with price being the only deciding factor on which a contractor is awarded the project.

In design-build, a selection committee chooses a contractor based on a combination of low-bid and overall value. The developer selected is a contractor who collaborates early on with the design team. Because design and construction can occur concurrently, the time it takes to complete an improvement is reduced and innovation is increased.

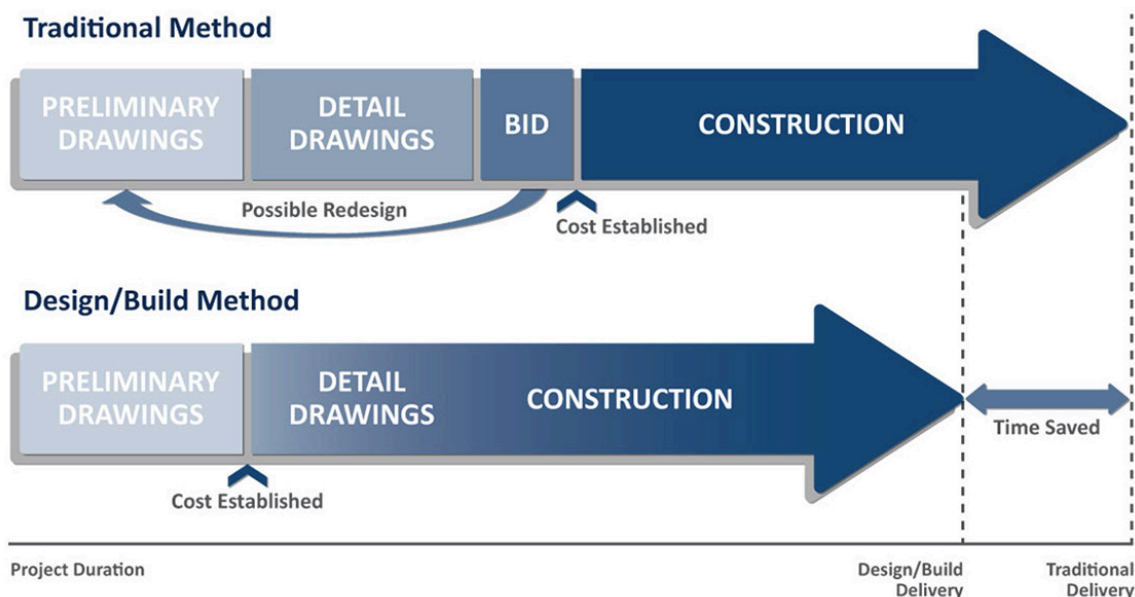
Like design-bid-build, this process also benefits the taxpayer, as it still requires a bid process with a selection made on the best overall value. The design-

builders that initially submit their qualifications will be shortlisted based on predefined criteria to narrow down the number of proposals. The shortlisted developers will submit their proposals and a final selection will be determined by rating the technical, financial and schedule aspects of the proposal.

This alternative delivery method is an opportunity to build upon providing a customer service to the traveling public due to its synergistic approach that maximizes the value and accelerates the overall project delivery. This will guarantee an affordable, low-cost, quality-constructed project.

Increased Innovation

Some might ask, if design-build is so good, why aren't we using it for all of our projects? According to NDOR Roadway Design-Build Engineer Kyle Keller, the design-build process is "good" but not all projects are good candidates for that method of delivery. "The asset preservation projects, which make up the majority of our program, would not be considered for design-build. Larger scale and high dollar project costs that could benefit from innovation in schedule and design/construction aspects will benefit the most using this method."



As far as potential disadvantages/challenges to using design-build for construction projects, Keller noted that the primary challenge is “shifting the paradigm to preparing a contract that specifies what we want built with room for modifications, rather than completing a (schematic) plan package specifying every aspect of the design of the project. There is a balance between allowing for innovation in the project and maintaining control over certain aspects of the project.”

Design-build was first used in the 1990s. More than half of the states have completed four or more projects; however, about half of the states have not delivered a design-build project.

Alternative Delivery Tool

According to Keller, NDOR wanted to utilize this alternative delivery tool for a number of years because it allows for more innovation in schedule, budget, design and construction aspects, which can lead to lower prices and overall better quality. It is intended to accelerate project delivery since the contractor and designers are coordinating and working concurrently throughout the process. This method is used where schedule plays a major factor or where more innovation is desired.

The expansion of the four-lane expressway on US-275

from Scribner to West Point was chosen as the first design-build project because the Build Nebraska Act (BNA) meetings held in 2016 highlighted public interest in completing the expressway between Norfolk and Omaha. The Scribner to West Point project is another step toward completing the US-275 expressway. Governor Ricketts has announced that construction will commence in 2019, and the design-build accelerated delivery method will allow for a greater opportunity to deliver the project within that timeframe.

As part of this inaugural project, NDOR will be reviewing and refining established guidelines, developing template documents, and conducting “lessons learned analysis” that will be incorporated into future projects. The process will be used on projects that meet the criteria that has been developed.

As NDOR learns from completion of the first design-build project, Keller believes this option will offer many opportunities for accelerated delivery and cost savings on future projects. “Once we review and refine the process, we are confident the design-build method, under the right circumstances, will be an excellent tool for innovation and efficiency in project delivery and in meeting the needs of our customers.” ■

NDOR, City of Omaha Partner for Berkshire Hathaway Event



Photo by Jake Daniels

A joint effort between the Nebraska Department of Roads and the City of Omaha brought a positive outcome for everyone, as they partnered to provide 160 Jersey barriers for the Berkshire Hathaway stockholder events May 6 and 7 at CenturyLink Center Omaha. The barriers provided additional safety measures with increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic anticipated in the area.

Lean Six Sigma “5S” Project Engages Staff at Wahoo Maintenance Yard

NDOR staff at the District 1 Wahoo Highway Maintenance Yard have been engaged in an improvement project during March and April – a special kind of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) effort known as “5S.” The primary goal of 5S is to create a clean, well-ordered work environment, where there is “a place for everything and everything is in its place.”

5S helps work teams benefit from the establishment of a “visual workplace.” This is important, because a workplace with visual cues assists employees and visitors in easy navigation of floor space and work areas. When 5S is implemented, the location of tools, parts, supplies, equipment, safety/emergency gear, walkways and cleaning stations are evident. Some of the benefits of 5S include improved work efficiency, expedited orientation for new or temporary employees, improved quality, reduced waste, increased safety and the elimination of searches for work-related items.

At Wahoo, a small project team was chartered to focus on the functional areas of the yard mechanic, Duane Nelson. Travis Haberman was assigned as the

“5S” Tools

Sort – separate needed items from unneeded items, and eliminate the latter.

Set in order (a.k.a., *Simplify*) – keep or move needed items to the correct place to allow for easy and immediate retrieval (frequently used, closer; infrequently used, at a distance).

Shine (a.k.a., *Sweep*) – keep the work area swept and clean.

Standardize – standardize cleanup, define and designate “shine duties.”

Sustain (a.k.a., *Self-Discipline*) – make a habit of maintaining established procedures.

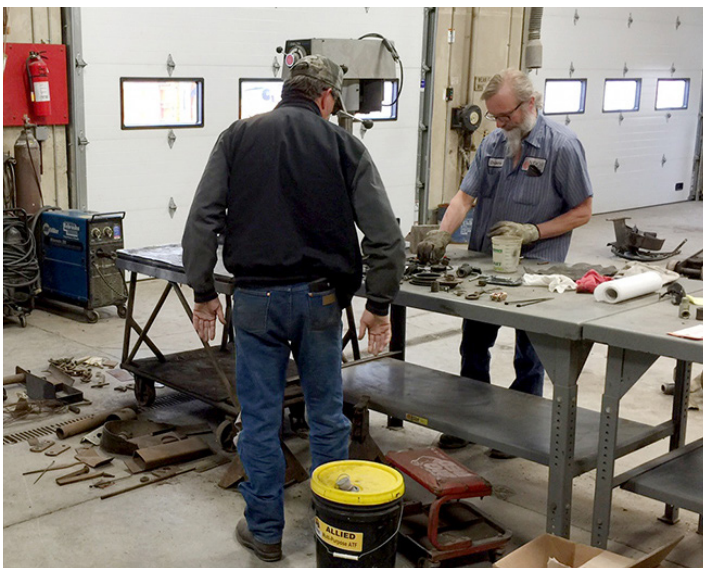
LSS process improvement coordinator; facilitating and helping the team in their efforts. First, observations were made to help the team understand the functionality of the mechanic’s work area. Then, training and orientation to the 5S process was provided. A 5S event was scheduled and conducted, lasting approximately three days. During the event, the project team progressed through each of the five phases required.

In each phase of 5S, the project team utilized

a checklist of actions associated with each “S.” Team members created a hand-drawn “current state map” to capture the location of equipment, tools and parts used by the mechanic. The map served to help the team during later brainstorming and discussions when they designed a “future state map,” one in which the work area was reconfigured for better efficiency, safety and visual cues.

One of the key components for the Wahoo mechanic’s 5S was the labeling of items for consistency in retrieving and returning tools, equipment and parts to their proper places. Additional key components included the utilization of a color scheme, signage and floor marking to create a well-ordered environment. Wahoo project team members chose to label items using large, black font on a yellow background, which serves to help the mechanic and highway maintenance workers quickly identify items associated with routine tasks.

For the Wahoo yard, 5S will not end upon implementation. Plans, checklists, signage, metrics, meetings and team collaboration will all be utilized to keep 5S a daily practice. In the coming months, look for the expansion and growth of 5S within NDOR districts. ■



5S project team members Duane Nelson and Kenny Schultz sort through items at the Wahoo Highway Maintenance Yard.

Clinger's Award-Winning Tank Monitoring System Provides Efficiencies, Savings

NDOR's Scott Clinger likes to tinker with gadgets and electronics. He is always on the lookout for ways to use technology to solve a problem or accomplish a task in a faster, more efficient and cost-effective way. It was this mindset that resulted in his "tank monitoring" innovation, used to monitor fluid levels in the deicing chemical tanks at several sites located throughout District 3 and District 5.

Clinger, an Information Technology Infrastructure Support Analyst Sr. at District 5 in Gering, described the creative process: "We've had an existing tank monitoring system in District 5 for several years. At the same location is a roadway camera. I was at the site one day working on the camera and decided to check on the tank monitoring system. That is when I thought that many of the components I use in the camera cabinets could be used to build our own system. I wanted something that could be built and deployed by someone with limited technical knowledge using off-the-shelf components."

After formulating a plan, Clinger said it took a day to build and document the prototype and another day to write the software that polls the hardware and populates the database. At that point, the prototype languished in his office for over a year until, one day, he found out that there was statewide interest in such a system.

"After I presented the idea to the District Operations and Maintenance Managers (DOMMs), District 3 was very interested in being involved. Kevin Andersen, IT Infrastructure Support Analyst at District 3 in Norfolk, tackled the control unit assembly and deployment in District 3. Kevin provided much needed feedback and has helped refine the system."

Simple System

According to Clinger, the system is simple. It's comprised of a control cabinet and any number of ultrasonic level sensors. The sensors are placed in the top of each deicing chemical tank and measure the fluid level.



Scott Clinger's tank monitoring system is used to monitor fluid levels in deicing chemical tanks at several sites located throughout NDOR Districts 3 and 5.

Periodically an application will query each system and record the tank levels in a database.

The control cabinet contains a couple of power supplies, and the communication and data collection hardware. Plug it into 120v power and the internet and you're ready to go.

Clinger noted that the tank monitoring system is used at liquid deicing chemical resupply stations to determine (remotely) what quantity of chemical is present. "The resupply stations are positioned between adjacent maintenance offices where snowplow routes from each office meet. This way, if the trucks are low on chemical, they can take on enough for the return trip."

There are seven sites in operation—six in District 3 and one in District 5—together monitoring over one million gallons of product, with plans for four more sites in District 5 this summer. One control unit will monitor up to eight sensors and costs about \$1,000. Each sensor costs around \$500. The system is scalable so more than eight tanks can be monitored if necessary.

As far as savings, Clinger noted, "Probably the most cost savings realized would be that we do not have to pay monthly maintenance fees for service or for data access. Once the system is up and running it is essentially maintenance free."



Sensors are placed in the top of a deicing chemical tank to measure the fluid levels, which are recorded in a remote database.

Photos by Scott Clinger, District 5

Enthusiastic Reception

Clinger is happy with his innovation, noting that it has exceeded his expectations. "One of my primary goals was to make it simple to assemble. All the units in District 3 were assembled by Kevin, using the parts list, parts layout and wiring diagrams I provided. Those units are virtually identical to the ones I built."

He is also excited by the enthusiasm with which this project was accepted, adding that "it speaks a lot for the attitude of cooperation within the NDOR." Last year, he received a certificate of appreciation from the state suggestion system.

Clinger said his only regret is that he did not promptly submit his idea to the suggestion system. His advice for anyone who has an innovation, but is hesitant to suggest it?

"With apologies for sounding like a Nike slogan, I would say if you have an innovation in mind, just do it. Over the years, most of the things I've created were to make my current job a little easier. Chances are that if it benefits you, it will benefit someone else."

Mock Crash Sends Powerful Message to Ralston High School Students

By Jake Daniels
Communication Division

The Friday before prom, April 7, 2017, Ralston High School students took a break from classes and were treated to a morning outside. They relaxed with friends on the grassy slope surrounding the school's rear parking lot, taking in the sun, clear blue skies, and the scene of a bloody wreck involving seven of their classmates, one of whom was wheeled away in a body bag.

The seven actors later took a bow on stage, but they were the ones who provided wrenching screams and cries during the staged drunk driving accident. As students filed out of the main building to the audience area, the seven were already arranged around the scene of the two wrecked cars. The screaming started at the sound of a violent collision broadcast over loudspeakers.

"It was really intense," said Jacob Alberico, 17, who played one of the drivers. "Not just for the actors, but for the students watching it, too."



First responders to mock crash care for "injured" passenger.

The scene was driven by live audio: a stream of radio communications between first responders and dispatchers over the loudspeakers was punctuated by sirens from police vehicles and ambulances. The panicked cries, screaming and emotional outbursts from the young actors filled in the audible cracks.

In their scenario, two drivers under the influence have collided head-on. One passenger who wasn't wearing a seat belt was ejected from the vehicle—later in the production, she was declared deceased by first responders and her covered figure was transported away by a coroner's van. The injured passengers were loaded into the rear of ambulances on the scene and the drivers were both handcuffed and removed by police officers to the backs of patrol cars.

Emotions Stirred

For at least some of the students watching, it was an evocative spectacle. Haley Coleman, a 16-year-old junior, said it stirred up past emotions stemming from a losing a young family friend to a car accident.

"It might have brought up some feelings in some people, but I think it was necessary," she said. "People make those quick decisions without thinking, and it ends like this."



Ralston High School students witness aftermath of a mock drunk driving crash.

The mock crash was followed by a short assembly indoors. Students listened to the story of Todd Calfee, who lost his daughter to a drunk driver, and received supportive messages from Mayor Donald Groesser and Police Chief Marc Leonardo.

Students were also presented with information about the importance of seat belts and responsible driving. Susan Booth, Vice President, Business Development at the National Safety Council of Nebraska, shared the story of her brother who was killed in a car crash while not belted. During her presentation, she shared an impactful example, asking 22 students to stand

to represent the 22 lives lost in motor vehicle crashes in Nebraska in 2016 alone. She asked them to sit down, one by one, until there were only six standing. Those six represented the six individuals that were belted. She again reminded them that statistics indicate that seat belt usage will reduce the risk of fatal injuries by 45 to 60 percent, and will save over 13,000 lives every year.

Principal Jesse Tvrdy closed the day's events and made sure students knew that counselors were available for anyone who felt emotionally impacted by the scene portrayed.

"It is an intense thing that can bring back emotions and stuff like that," Alberico said. "Your friend in the passenger seat who you think you're just taking home could end up out on the pavement, dead, like what happened back there."



One of "drivers" in mock crash performs field sobriety test.
Photos by Jake Daniels

Working the Night Shift at NDOR's Omaha District Operations Center

By Jake Daniels
Communication Division

In a metropolitan area of more than a million people, the interstates and highways don't stop moving, nor do the cameras and signs of NDOR's Omaha District Operations Center (DOC).

The Omaha DOC—the hub for District 2's cameras, digital message signs and communications—is, however, very quiet at night. There are no phones ringing with questions about road closures or news media in the facility for project updates. Only the occasional tapping of a keyboard to update a sign, or mouse click to zoom a camera, breaks through the low murmur of a television news broadcast.

Chanda Parker, a regular day operator in the center and the go-to switch-hitter for the night shift, has been one set of eyes behind the cameras since 2013. A regular dayshift finds her and two other operators posted behind 12 monitors, switching between the 58 cameras as they keep an eye on the traffic.

When she's covering for the regular nighttime operator, things on the monitors are slower. This particular night in mid-April is something of a calm moment before the uptick of construction season.

"Once they get into construction, you'll see a lot more going on," she says, nodding slightly toward the camera views crowding one monitor. "They usually do a lot of their construction during the night."

She speaks softly, just loud enough to hear over the television's white noise and some periodic radio crackle from the State Patrol desks behind her. Parker could shout if she wanted, with no other operators to disturb and no meetings to interrupt.

And even during the busier construction season, when the daytime message boards will warn motorists of nightly lane closures, "quiet" will still be the theme inside the DOC at night. The activity will be much the same as the day crew's chores, just slower.

Tweets, Digital Signs, 511

The regular night operator will keep drivers informed with Tweets sent out through @NDORomaha, messages on one of the 54 digital signs (20 are stationary and 34 are portable), and regular updates on Nebraska511. Operators access all of the various remote devices—cameras, signs, vehicle detection stations, weather information



Photo by Jake Daniels

Chanda Parker works the overnight shift in District 2's DOC in Omaha on Tuesday, April 18, 2017. Parker is usually a daytime employee but switches to nights when needed.

sites—through specialized software that was updated in February, and can send out alerts straight to NDOR employees about incidents and weather call-outs.

"We are basically like the first line," she says. "[We] alert the traffic to any accidents, any hazards that might be in the road up ahead of them...so we can keep traffic moving smoothly."

It can be anything from roadwork, to accidents, to vehicles on the inner shoulder, to damaged asphalt. After identifying the hazard, Parker and other operators can scan back along the route affected, find one of the digital message boards and try to give drivers the earliest warning possible.

Of Parker's four monitors casting blue light into the nighttime DOC, one is devoted entirely to the cameras along 71 miles of connected interstate and freeways. After spending 13 years working with crews on the roads—"driving the plow trucks and all of that ... pretty much everything that they do out there right now"—there was a stark change in perspective when she moved to the DOC.

"To me, they're not going so fast—it's so different," she says. "Working out there on the road, everything is flying past you—on the cameras, everything is slower. I can tell when traffic is slowed down and I can tell when traffic is going a little faster, yet it's so different than when you're just riding. It took me a little while to get used to it, but I know what I'm looking at now." ■

Nebraska Highway Safety Conference Attendees Address “Toward Zero Deaths”

By **Simera Reynolds**
Nebraska Office of Highway Safety

During the 2017 Highway Safety Conference, held March 24th on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Innovation Campus, the State of Nebraska’s 2017-2021 Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) was presented. In addition, four national experts provided the latest information on traffic safety issues, including: occupant restraint use, young drivers, impaired driving and local roadway safety planning strategies.

The speakers covered current critical highway safety subjects and 170 participants from law enforcement, driver training, public health, roadway engineers, education, federal and state agencies, and other traffic safety

advocates had the opportunity to ask questions of the presenters and network throughout the conference. Attendees were encouraged to review the new Nebraska Strategic Highway Safety Plan and to provide comments and feedback to the SHSP Leadership and/or Working Committee.

It was emphasized that reaching the SHSP goals of reducing traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2021 will require the work of everyone. The challenge is great but realistic because 94 percent of fatalities are the fault of drivers (roadway users) with only four percent a roadway issue and two percent a vehicle issue. Targeting driver behavior provides the best opportunity for success on our way “Toward Zero Deaths.” ■



Conference Speakers

Harris Blackwood, Director, Georgia’s Governor’s Office of Highway Safety, provided information on distracted driving, young driver challenges, and occupant protection use.

Dr. James Hedlund, Associate Administrator NHTSA (retired) and Researcher, presented research outcomes from the national Naturalistic Driving Study that electronically monitored over 3,000 drivers for a year, observing common driving behaviors from those who accumulated many hours and miles of driving activity under all types on conditions.

Robert Ticer, Chief of Police for Loveland, Colorado, described effects of the marijuana legalization in Colorado – the retail industry, challenges for law enforcement, and the impact on impaired driving, including the effects to border states, including Nebraska, where marijuana is illegal.

Molly O’Brien, engineer with the consulting firm Kimley-Horn and Associates, presented information on Nebraska’s effort to assist local counties with road safety plans. The plans will assist three pilot counties in Nebraska with identifying corridors that may benefit from systemic, low-cost safety improvements.



Photo by Bobbi Olson, Traffic Engineering
Attendees gather to hear educational presentations during the 2017 Highway Safety Conference, held March 24 at the UNL Innovation Campus.

Standing Bear Historic Marker Unveiled at Blue River Rest Area

By Jake Daniels
Communication Division

To the sounds of a drum and in front of a crowd of tribe members, a historic marker commemorating the story of Standing Bear and the Ponca Tribe was unveiled at the Blue River Rest Area on Saturday afternoon May 6, 2017. The rest area is located on I-80 eastbound, mile marker 381, one mile west of the Milford Interchange.

The memorial is the newest of the more than 500 markers around the state, according to Scott Shafer of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs.

Shafer hopes the placement of the marker will spread understanding of the tribe's importance among travelers and the general public. Chief Standing Bear sued in an Omaha court in 1879 for a writ of habeas corpus, resulting in a judge's landmark ruling that "an Indian is a person."

"The intersection of history with the interstate is perfect," he said.

Photos by Jake Daniels



Young participants lead the way in the Ponca Remembrance Walk on Nebraska 15 north of David City on May 4, 2017.



Chairman Larry Wright, Jr., of the Ponca Tribal Council and other members of the tribe bless the Standing Bear and the Ponca Tribe historic marker after its unveiling on May 6, 2017. Wright burned sage around the marker as he and tribe members sang the Four Directions song together.

The rest area is alongside the Blue River, which the Ponca followed during their force removal to Oklahoma. The nearby Mt. Pleasant Cemetery holds the remains of Standing Bear's daughter, Prairie Flower, killed by tuberculosis, and one of his granddaughters, who died when a tornado hit the tribe's camp in Seward County.

Roger Kalkwarf, NDOR's District 1 Highway Operations and Maintenance Manager, had the area closed off to non-event traffic to allow parking for a larger crowd, reduce noise and increase safety. In addition, NDOR employees also placed the marker and provided landscaping around it.

"We try to work with everybody all the time," Kalkwarf said. His main concern was the well-being of attendees: "We always try to look at the safety part. Safety first."

The marker's unveiling goes hand-in-hand with the tribe's signing a deed of ownership to 19.5 miles of the Chief Standing Bear Trail. Additionally, the two events were the impetus behind the Ponca Remembrance Walk, a 273-mile journey from Niobrara to Barneston. Chairman Larry Wright, Jr., of the Ponca Tribal Council said that 40-50 tribe members a day were participating in at least some part of the trek.

The journey blossomed from two participants into a full tribal event, and is the first such walk the tribe has made as a group. The walk ended on May 10th, followed by the deed signing on the 11th in Barneston. ■

“Move Over” Campaign Protects Law Enforcement and First Responders

All 50 States have “Move Over” laws to protect law enforcement officers and other first responders stopped on our Nation’s roads. Yet only 71% of the public are aware of these laws, and traffic-related incidents continue to be the number one cause of death among on-duty law enforcement officers. Together with our law enforcement partners and State Highway Safety Offices, NHTSA is working to increase awareness of these life-saving “Move Over” laws and highlight the need to protect public safety professionals who place themselves at risk to protect motorists.



Nebraska Celebrates Public Transit

By Kari Ruse
Intermodal Planning

On March 8, Nebraska Lieutenant Governor Mike Foley presented a proclamation signed by Governor Pete Ricketts declaring the second week of April 2017 as Nebraska Public Transit Week. Over 45 public transit agencies across the state celebrated their service by hosting open houses, offering free rides to veterans and sponsoring “Stuff the Bus” events to benefit local charities.

Marilee Hyde, North Platte Public Transit Manager, took advantage of the publicity and promotional materials to raise awareness about the service. She said, “We average about 300 passengers a day. A lot of people think we’re only for the disabled or seniors, but we take people to school, we take people to work and we are true public transit.”

Nebraska Public Transit week is supported by the NDOR Transit Section, University of Nebraska and the Nebraska Association of Transit Providers. For more information about about public transportation in Nebraska visit nebraskatransit.com.



Photo Courtesy of Carol Wibben, Wayne Senior Center

Driver Dan Carroll is ready to start his day as a rural public transportation driver in the City of Wayne. In fiscal year 2016, Wayne vehicles transported 5,536 passengers and traveled 8,905 miles.

Trash-Off Volunteers Keep Roadsides Clean

By Denise Wallman
Operations Division

You're running late, gobbling down a fast food dinner as you travel. When you're finished, empty wrappers, napkins and a paper sack lay in the front seat. What will you do with that trash?

Sadly, over half of Americans admit they have littered at one time or another, and motorists seem to be the leading culprits. Across the nation, roadsides along U.S. highways bear the signs of this mindless action. Even though Nebraska fares better than most other states, we still accumulate large amounts of roadside litter. Have you ever wondered, who picks up all that trash?

Now in its 27th year, the Adopt-a-Highway program, sponsored by Nebraska Department of Roads, allows civic groups, school groups, church groups, individuals and families the opportunity to "adopt" a section of roadside to call their own. During the "Great Nebraska Trash-Off" in April, 2,316 volunteers cleaned 815 lane miles and filled 2,146 orange trash bags with roadside litter and debris. A big shout out to these dedicated volunteers, who happily and generously give of their time and energy to keep our Nebraska roadsides clean and litter-free!

For more information about the Adopt-a-Highway Program, go to roads.nebraska.gov/projects/get-involved/adopt-hwy/ ■



The club members from Nebraska Corvette Association-Lincoln, picked up ten bags of trash.



Unusual trash picked up by St. Patrick's Catholic Youth Organization of McCook included a VCR, two tractor tires and canceled checks from 1978.



Eleven students and alumni from Giltner Public Schools helped pick up trash.